

OBFA Conservation Report

<i>Project:</i>	"The Manse", Nun's island Theatre, 23 Nun's island, Galway	<i>Date of Submission</i>	19 December 2022
<i>Project Ref:</i>	2123	<i>Status:</i>	C2 Part 8

FILE NAME/LOCATION

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Introduction

OBFA Architects has been appointed by Galway City Council to renovate and extend the existing "Manse" to the rear of the existing Nun's Island theatre to house a new Creative Centre. There will be alterations within the existing external envelope of the "The Manse" with a single storey extension proposed to the north of the link structures between the "Manse" main two storey structure and the original theatre building. The roofline between the two storey "Manse" and the theatre will change from inverted butterfly form to pitched roof form so that it will be possible to integrate a new platform lift, providing universal access to all levels. There will also be minor internal alterations within the existing theatre building to improve the accessibility of the toilets. The existing external landscaping areas within the site curtilage will be upgraded and improved.

The purpose of this report is to analyse the protected structure, its history, context, condition, identifying features that merit special protection providing an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment of any interventions that are being considered as part of the proposed development.

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Site Aerial View



NIAH Protected Structure Description

Excerpts below from National Buildings of Ireland (NIAH) website viewed online copied below.

“National Buildings of Ireland NIAH Survey data: Reg No 30313031

Rating: Regional

Categories of Special Interest: Architectural, Artistic, Social

Original Use: Church/chapel

In Use As: Theatre

Description: Attached gabled-fronted classical-style former Presbyterian church, built c.1840, having pedimented three-bay double-height front elevation and five-bay side elevations. Now in use as Galway Youth Theatre Centre. Recent lean-to extension to rear attaching church to former manse. Hipped slate roof with cast-iron rainwater goods. Ashlar limestone pediment with acroterions to gable-front. Exposed ashlar limestone walls with tetrastyle Doric pilasters to gable-front with ashlar limestone pediment having acroterions. Raised panels between pilasters, above openings. Square-headed window openings to lower part of front elevation having tooled limestone architraves, sills and entablature and fixed twelve-pane timber-framed windows. Round-headed window openings to side elevations inset in round-headed recesses having limestone voussoirs and sills to margined twelve-over-nine pane timber sliding sash windows. Square-headed door opening to front having tooled limestone Egyptian-style doorcase with pediment and having panelled timber double-leaf door. Enclosed limestone paved yard to front with cast-iron railings on limestone plinths with tooled limestone gate piers, one pier displaying crow's foot benchmark, and double-leaf cast-iron gates.

Appraisal: The classically styled façade of this striking building makes a distinctive architectural statement and is an imposing feature of the streetscape. The finely detailed front demonstrates the high level of skill possessed by the masons of the time and its setting is enhanced by the forecourt with railings and by the presence of the former manse to the rear.”

Research & Survey Description

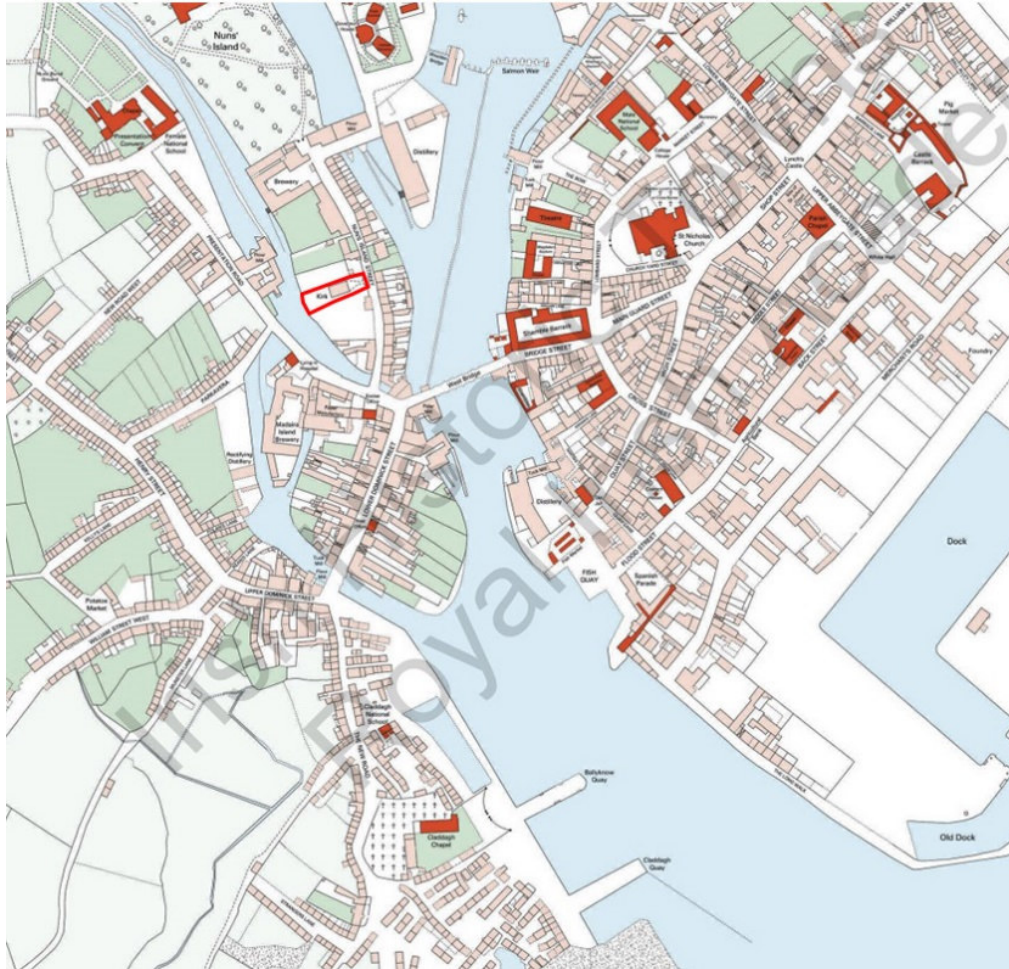
Research & Survey Methodology/ Sources: Various site visits / visual inspections (11/02/22, 13/04/22 & 11/08/22). Obtention of specialist surveys including “Investigative & condition Report”, “Damp Assessment Report”, “Asbestos Survey report”, “Bat Survey”, “Swift Survey”, Topographic & Utility Surveys, Creation of BIM model of the existing building, using survey information obtained, to provide set of record existing survey drawings and gain a thorough understanding of the building and its features. Historical research carried out online complimented with material viewed at the National Library and the National Archives.

Historical Context/ Mapping

The site of this project is located in the historic district of Nun's Island situated on the Western side of the Corrib river. This is outside the medieval town core of Galway which is on the eastern Corrib Riverbank.

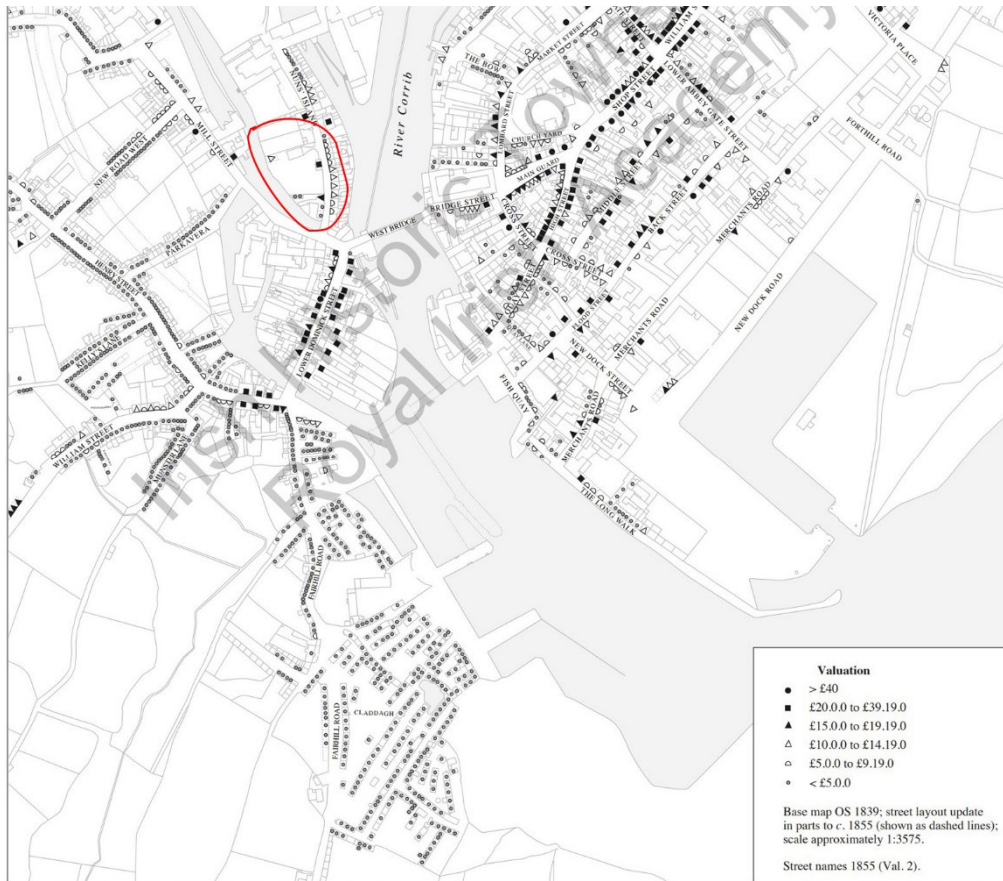
Text excerpt from BDP Masterplan for Nun's Island (viewed on line www.bdp.com- commissioned by NUIG) states: "The earliest recorded activity on Nuns' Island relates to a petition in the mid-seventeenth century by Sister Mary Bonaventure, Abbess of the Poor Clares, to establish a monastery in 1649. Today, Nuns' Island is densely developed with a wide variety of building types, including a church, a nineteenth century monastery, fine nineteenth century dwellings constructed by the mill owners and a modern school."

The part of Nun's Island where this project is located seems to have developed thanks to industrial activity in the 19th century, relating to the Mills and Distillery located to the north of the site.



Extract from Map 2, Galway, 1839, in Jacinta Prunty and Paul Walsh, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas, no. 28, Galway/Gaillimh, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2016* (www.ihta.ie, accessed December 2022).

The site on 1839 map is larger than current site and includes a building on the southern part of the site along the street where the "Protestant Asylum" is shown on later maps. The "Presbyterian meeting hall" (the current theatre) is the only building visible within the boundaries of the current site at this time.



Map 25. Valuation of residential buildings, 1855 (Val. 2).

Irish Historic Towns Atlas 2016

Map 25, valuation, 1855, in Jacinta Prunty and Paul Walsh, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas, no. 28, Galway/Gaillimh*, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2016 (www.ihata.ie, viewed December 2022).

Information from digital edition of “Irish Historic Towns Atlas no. 28, Galway/Gaillimh” by Jacinta Prunty and Paul Walsh for this site details noted below (including the Protestant Asylum building as within site in 1855):

“Topographical Information: Schoolhouse 1845 (Val. 1). Closed by 1855 (Val. 2). **Address:** Nun’s Island St W. **Theme:** Education.

Presbyterian church: Address: Nun’s Island St W.: **Theme:** Religion: **Date From:** 1835. **Topographical Information:** Presbyterian church, congregation transferred from former premises in 1835 (GWA 6.6.1835). Kirk 1839 (OS). Scotch church 1845 (Val. 1). Presbyterian chapel 1846 (Slater). Scots’ church 1855 (Val. 2), 1860 (Val. 3). Presbyterian meeting house 1872 (OS). Presbyterian church 1881 (Slater). Presbyterian meeting house 1893–5; Presbyterian church 1944 (OS). Converted to arts centre by 1985 (Garner, 55). Nun’s Island Theatre 2014 (OS). Nun’s Island Theatre 2016.”

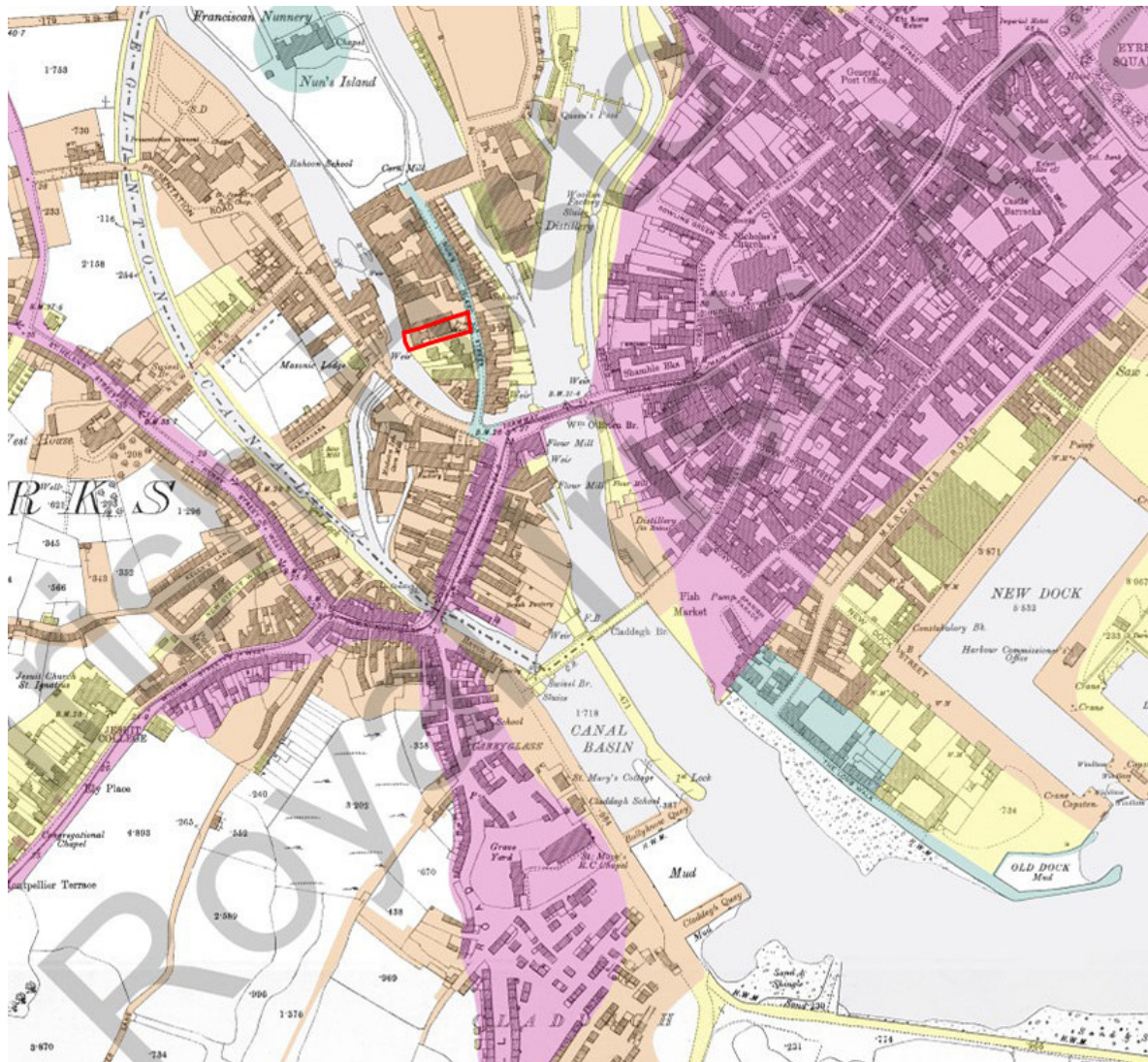
Topographical Information: Protestant asylum: Asylum for poor Protestants, built in 1840 (Semple)”

The original church appears unchanged from the 1839 OS Map. The building to the rear is a new addition post 1839 OS map and is listed above as a schoolhouse. The schoolhouse is not visible on later maps and according to the details above, was closed at the time of the 1855 Griffith’s Valuation (Val. 2). Extracts of the ownership status of these properties sourced from 1855 Griffith’s Valuation (Val. 2) are outlined later in this report. There is a high stone wall still in existence along the northern boundary between Church house and the riverside, we assume this is an element of the old schoolhouse.



Extract from OS Map- dated 1872, courtesy of the National Archives

Church house is clearly visible on the 1872 map, but without the link element. There is an extension to the original Presbyterian meeting house which is not the form of the existing Theatre as it exists today. The site has also been separated from the Protestant Asylum and is as per current site boundary.



Extract from Map 28, Galway, to 1895, in Jacinta Prunty and Paul Walsh, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas, no. 28, Galway/Gaillimh*, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2016 (www.ihta.ie) -viewed online accessed December 2022.

On the 1895 map the link between Church house and the Theatre building is in existence with the footprint similar to that of the buildings as they currently exist today.



- Churches, chapels, convents, meeting houses and residences (post-medieval)**
- A 8 Augustinian friars' residence (mid-17th cent.)
 - A 9 Augustinian friary (1833)
 - A 10 Augustinian nunnery (1646)
 - A 11 Augustinian nunnery (1817)
 - A 12 Capuchin friars' residence (mid-17th cent.)
 - A 13 Carmelite friary (1648)
 - A 14 Carmelite nunnery (mid-17th cent.)
 - A 15 Chapel (R.C.) (1818)
 - A 16 Dominican friars' residence (mid-17th cent.)
 - A 17 Dominican nunnery (1644)
 - A 18 Dominican nunnery (1686)
 - A 19 Franciscan friars' residence (mid-17th cent.)
 - A 20 Franciscan friary and R.C. church (c. 1725-4)
 - A 21 House of Capuchins (mid-17th cent.)
 - A 22 Jesuit residence (1645)
 - A 23 Methodist church (1858-9)
 - A 24 Poor Clare convent (1649)
 - A 25 Poor Clare nunnery (1642)
 - A 26 Presbyterian church (1860)
 - A 28 Presentation convent (1819)
 - A 29 Rich Clare nunnery (early 17th cent.)
 - A 30 St Augustine's Church (c. 1760)
 - A 31 St Ignatius Church (Jesuit) (1885)
 - A 32 St Joseph's Church (R.C.) (1882-3)
 - A 33 St Mary's on the Hill (Dominican) (1669)
 - A 34 St Nicholas's Chapel (R.C.) (1713)
 - A 35 St Patrick's Catholic Church (1816-42)
 - A 36 St Patrick's Monastery (1827)
 - A 37 Sisters of Mercy convent (1841-2)
- Hospitals and infirmary**
- B 1 Cholera hospital (1891)
 - B 2 County Infirmary (1707-1802)
 - B 3 Fever hospital (1820)
 - B 4 Foundling and fever hospital (pre-1798)
 - B 5 Leper house (1651)
 - B 6 Magdalen asylum (1824)
 - B 7 Magdalen house (1824)
 - B 8 Plague hospital (mid-17th cent.)
 - B 9 Protestant Asylum (1840)
 - B 10 St Bridget's Hospital (1841-2)
 - B 11 St Nicholas's hospital for the poor (1504)
- Manufacturing and trading sites**
- E 1 Agricultural bank (1839)
 - E 2 Bag factory (1865)
 - E 3 Bank of Ireland (1830)
 - E 4 Black mill (1689)
 - E 5 Brewers (1817)
 - E 6 Bridge Mills (1562)
 - E 7 Browne Mills (1619)
 - E 8 Cattle market (mid-17th cent.)
 - E 9 Chop-sole and bobbin factory (c. 1867)
 - E 10 Distillery (1839)
 - E 11 Fish market (1800)
 - E 12 Fish market, fresh-water (mid-17th cent.)
 - E 13 Fish market, salt-water (mid-17th cent.)
 - E 14 Flour mill (1839)
 - E 15 Flour mill (1839)
 - E 16 Flour mill (1839)
 - E 17 Gas works (1837)
 - E 18 Great Inn (mid-17th cent.)
 - E 19 Hotel (1821)
 - E 20 Joyce's Distillery (1800)
 - E 21 Little Gate Mill (early 16th cent.)
 - E 22 Minerva Island Brewery (1816)
 - E 23 Marble works (1845)
 - E 24 Marine Salt Works (c. 1852)
 - E 25 Market place (1637)
 - E 26 Martin's Mill (1538)
 - E 27 Mill and flour mill (mid-17th cent.)
 - E 28 Mill (1583)
 - E 29 Mill (1583)
 - E 30 Mill (1785)
 - E 31 National Bank (1839)
 - E 32 National Bank (1863-7)
 - E 33 Newcastle Distillery (1836)
 - E 34 Newswoman's Brewery (1839)
 - E 35 Paper manufactory (c. 1785)
 - E 36 Persse's Distillery (1842)
 - E 37 Pigmarket (1839)
 - E 38 Potato market (1839)
 - E 39 Provincial Bank (1839)
 - E 40 Railway Hotel (1852)
 - E 41 Receiving distillery (1826)
 - E 42 Regan's Mill (1813-14)
 - E 43 Royal Hotel (1810)
 - E 44 St Francis's Mill (1569)
 - E 45 Shambles (1547)
 - E 46 Shambles (1823)
 - E 47 Shambles (1839)
 - E 48 Tack mill (1839)
 - E 49 Vegetable and potato market (mid-17th cent.)
 - E 50 Waterworks (1867)
 - E 51 Windmill (1573)
 - E 52 Woollen factory (1895)

Extract from Map 5, Galway, c. 1200 to c. 1900, in Jacinta Prunty and Paul Walsh, Irish Historic Towns Atlas, no. 28, Galway/Gaillimh, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 2016 (www.ihata.ie) viewed online -accessed December 2022

“Map 5” above clearly shows the context of important buildings within the vicinity of the site of the Nun’s Island Presbyterian Church at 23 Nun’s Island, with the Protestant Asylum to the south (originally part of the same site), and nearby industrial buildings (Brewery, Regan’s Mill & Persse’s Distillery) to the North.

Planning History Information

Planning Search carried out online and in person at Galway City Council. There were no planning files available for viewing. The information below is noted as this information is known by Galway City Council.

Planning Ref	Applicant	Description	Address	Status	Date
Not available-possibly a Part 8 application	Assumed to be Galway City Council (building owners) on behalf of Galway Arts Centre	for change of use to arts centre and subsequently to a theatre space	23 Nuns Island Galway	Exists currently as theatre is in use.	C 1985

Historical Context/ Background

VALUATION OF TENEMENTS.
WEST WARD-PARISH OF ST. NICHOLAS.

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No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.			Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.
	Townlands and Geographies.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.		
				A. R. P.	s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.	
TOWNLANDS—cont. TOWNS OF GALWAY.								
SANDS' ISLAND—continned.								
40	Anne Hegan,	Thomas Joyce,	Flour-mill,	—	—	100 0 0	100 0 0	
41	Ambrose Rush and Thomas Palmer,	Burton Persse,	Corn-mill,	—	—	56 0 0	56 0 0	
42	Ambrose Rush,	Francis Fitzgerald,	Corn-mill,	—	—	78 0 0	78 0 0	
43	Superiority of Convent, Franciscan R. C. Chapel,	In fee,	Nunnery, offis, and land,	4 3 20	13 0 0	63 0 0	76 0 0	
41	Vacant,	Gerald Fitzgerald,	R. C. Chapel,	—	—	10 0 0	10 0 0	
45	Gerald Fitzgerald,	Francis Fitzgerald,	Maltstore, offis, & yard,	—	—	20 0 0	20 0 0	
46	Locke S. Mangan,	Same,	Brewery, offis, & yard,	—	—	52 0 0	52 0 0	
47	Matthew Conneen,	Same,	Flour-mill and yard,	—	—	26 0 0	26 0 0	
48	Ambrose Rush and Thomas Palmer,	Same,	Corn store,	—	—	24 0 0	24 0 0	
49	Vacant,	Same,	Corn store,	—	—	28 0 0	28 0 0	
49	Matthew Conneen,	Rev. Edmund Burke,	Corn store & yd. (in rear),	—	—	15 0 0	15 0 0	
50	Scott Church,	Burton Persse,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden, Church,	0 1 10	1 10 0	20 10 0	22 0 0	
51	Protestant Asylum,	Trusts of Scots Church,	Ho., off., & yd. (in rear),	—	—	19 0 0	19 0 0	
52	John O'Connell,	Burton Persse,	House and yard,	—	—	26 0 0	26 0 0	
53	John O'Connell,	Locke S. Mangan,	Ho., yard, & sun-garden,	—	—	12 0 0	12 0 0	
53	Locke S. Mangan,	Rev. Henry Marshall,	Stores, bakery, and yard,	—	—	22 0 0	22 0 0	
54	Henry Scott,	Locke S. Mangan,	House, office, and yard,	—	—	16 0 0	16 0 0	
55	Margaret Toole,	Same,	House and yard,	—	—	3 0 0	3 0 0	
56	John Barrett,	Same,	House and yard,	—	—	3 10 0	3 10 0	
57	Dominick D'Annally,	Same,	House & yard (in rear),	—	—	2 0 0	2 0 0	
58	Patrick Heuchan,	Same,	House & yard (in rear),	—	—	2 10 0	2 10 0	
LOWER DOMINICK-STREET (South-east end).								
1	Maria Beovne,	Reps. Robert Gray,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden,	0 0 21	0 10 0	33 10 0	34 0 0	
2	Thomas Palmer,	Samuel Sheue,	Ho. off. yard, & sun. garden,	—	—	38 0 0	38 0 0	
3	Maria Burke (Ziegler),	Charles O'Connor,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden,	0 0 15	0 10 0	33 10 0	34 0 0	
4	Vacant,	Same,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden,	0 0 14	0 10 0	33 10 0	34 0 0	
5	Robert Martin,	Edward R. Burke,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden,	0 0 16	0 10 0	37 10 0	38 0 0	
6	Henry Clements,	Charles O'Connor,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden,	0 0 28	1 0 0	29 0 0	30 0 0	
7	Rielaud Delberty,	Same,	Ho. office, & sun-garden,	—	—	20 0 0	20 0 0	
8	Patrick Staunton,	George Burke,	Ho. offis, yard, & garden,	0 0 31	1 0 0	30 0 0	31 0 0	
9	Vacant,	Mary Birmingham,	Ho. (part of) offis, & yard,	—	—	22 0 0	22 0 0	
10	Locke S. Mangan,	James Martyn,	House (part of),	—	—	8 0 0	8 0 0	
11	James Martyn,	Benjamin L. Guinness,	Flour-mill,	—	—	56 0 0	56 0 0	
12	Ambrose Rush and Thomas Palmer,	Abraham Marshall,	Flour-mill,	—	—	25 0 0	25 0 0	
13	Martin King,	John Castello,	House (part of),	—	—	65 0 0	65 0 0	
14	William Costello,	John Castello,	House (part of),	—	—	6 10 0	6 10 0	
14	Walter Burke,	Mary Burke,	House (part of) office,	—	—	13 0 0	15 0 0	
14	Thomas Caven,	Same,	House (part of),	—	—	6 10 0	6 10 0	
14	Mary Burke,	Rebecca Goghlan and Letitia Burke,	House (part of),	—	—	9 0 0	9 0 0	
15	John Curran,	Mary Burke,	House (part of),	—	—	6 0 0	6 0 0	
16	Ambrose Rush and Thomas Palmer, (North-east end)	John Blakency,	Flour-mill,	—	—	2 10 0	2 10 0	
17	John Morris,	Anne Coyne and Elizabeth Jennings,	House and yard,	—	—	85 0 0	85 0 0	
18	Jonathan Falerty,	Mary Burke,	House and office,	—	—	20 0 0	20 0 0	
19	Locke S. Mangan,	Same,	House,	—	—	8 0 0	8 0 0	
20	Dennis Corcoran,	James Hosack and another,	House,	—	—	9 0 0	9 0 0	
21	Vacant,	Same,	House, office, and yard,	—	—	17 0 0	17 0 0	
22	Walter Burke,	Same,	House,	—	—	8 0 0	8 0 0	
23	John Coen,	Same,	House, office, and yard,	—	—	12 0 0	12 0 0	
24	Nicholas Colahan,	Charles O'Connor,	House and small yard,	—	—	9 0 0	9 0 0	
25	James Lynch,	Same,	House, office, and yard,	—	—	30 0 0	30 0 0	
26	Commissioners of Excise, Maria O'Connor, Alexander McLehan,	Maria O'Connor, Maria O'Connor,	Excise office, Ho/annual rent, £17 10s, House, offices, and yard,	—	—	41 0 0 17 0 0	41 0 0 17 0 0	

Extract from "Griffith's Valuation (Val. 2)" published in 1855 (askaboutireland.ie). -viewed online Dec 2022.

The digital edition of "Irish Historic Towns Atlas no. 28, Galway/Gaillimh" indicates that the Griffith's valuation information published in 1855 was carried out in the mid 1840s as states "The reports of the valuation officers who surveyed Galway in August 1845, along with the published valuation of 1855"

The published information relating to the project site in 1855 names "Scots Church" as "tenant" occupant and "Immediate lessor" (landlord) as "Burton Persse". On the valuation there is reference to a residence "in retre" under the same map reference of "Scots Church" occupied by "Rev William Adare" with "Trustees of Scots Church" as landlord. It would seem therefore that the Old Schoolhouse was being used as a residence at the time of this valuation.

Extract from www.dia.ie (dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940) names Architect of this Presbyterian Church as "James Cusack -information from Maureen Duddy of Kinvara who is doing thesis on the church for MUBC degree UCD e; illus. in Laurence Kirkpatrick, Presbyterians in Ireland: an illustrated history (booklink 2006)".



Photo of the front Façade of The Presbyterian Meeting Hall, now Nun's Island theatre from NIAH website. Building designed by James Cusack.

Information on Church Architect James Cusack – extract from www.dia.ie :“ *Architect of Merchants Road, Galway, listed as such in ‘Pigot & Co.’s City of Dublin and Hibernian Provincial Directory 1824, 206. Cusack appears to have been active in Galway from circa 1816 until the late 1840s. His buildings in Galway include the Pro-Cathedral (1816-21), the Bank of Ireland (1831), the Presbyterian Church (1833-5) and the remodeling of the Franciscan Church (1848).*”

This building is modest in scale but is an Architectural Jewell in the Neo-Classical style.

Given that “Burton Persse” is named as the owner of this property on the 1855 Griffith’s Valuation, we sought information on his story hoping that this would provide additional information on the history of the existing buildings. Following this we identified and viewed “The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964” by Gerry Kearney in the “National Library of Ireland”. This book is an excellent resource and gives a detailed history of the Persse family. We discovered a very colourful history of the Persse family, of which Burton Persse was a senior member. Burton Persse was involved in the creation of “Persse’s Distillery” of Nun’s Island.

We believe that the history of the buildings on this site is closely related to the history of the Persse’s distillery to the north and the Persse family. Thanks to the “The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964” by Gerry Kearney we can establish that Burton de Burgh Persse’s father Burton Persse (**1746-1831**) was the brother of William Persse (**c. 1728-1802**), Lady Gregory’s Great Grandfather and Sir Hugh Lane’s Great Great Grandfather.

As the Persse family appear to have played an important role in the development of this part of the city, the buildings on this site, as well as their links to such important artistic figures as Lady Gregory & Sir Hugh Lane, we think information on their history is worth sharing in this report to help to understand their social and historical importance.

The name "Burton" was passed down from father to son & heir in the Moyode branch of the Persse family. There were two Burton Persses (father & son) alive in 1845, Burton de Burgh Persse (c. 1782-1859) and his son Burton Robert Parsons Persse (1828-1885). Given the dates, we think that it was Burton de Burgh Persse who is named on the "Griffiths valuation" as his son would only have been a teenager in 1845. It is possible that Burton de Burgh Persse owned "Scots Church" at the time of its construction in 1835 as from details given in "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney, Burton de Burgh Persse was a wealthy businessman very active in Galway from at least 1812 onwards. However, it also appears from this source that the Persse family were members of the Church of Ireland as relatives were Rectors. Burton de Burgh's Great Great grandfather, Rev Dudley Persse (1625-1699), and founder of the Persse family in Galway "*Held the office of archdeacon of Tuam from 1662-1670*"..., a cousin was "*Revd. William Persse (?-1813) .. was rector of Tynagh (Diocese of Clonfert), Co. Galway*" (3).

We wondered about the link between the Persse family and the Presbyterian church and why they would have a Presbyterian church on their lands. Thanks to the kind assistance of the Galway County Council librarian, we think various newspaper articles from the library archive (copied below) shed light on this part of the puzzle.

"The Connacht Telegraph of Wed Nov 27th 1833" states "*The Presbyterian's resident in Galway have advertised for a contract for building a Presbyterian House of Worship in that Town*"

Extract of an advert by the Presbyterian Congregation in Galway appealing to their Presbyterian counterparts in Belfast for financial assistance in the "Belfast Newsletter of Tues February 14th 1834" states: "*Presbyterian Congregation in Galway.- The religious public are aware that a short time ago the Presbyterians of Galway, who have been hitherto without a place of worship and without a minister, commenced a series of laudable efforts in order to supply this deficiency. Being few in numbers, and surrounded by a population which is proverbially the most ignorant and bigoted in Ireland, they contributed liberally amongst themselves- a gentleman, a member of the Established Church, freely gave them a piece of ground as a site for their place of worship, which would have cost 150 had it been sold. Still notwithstanding their exertions, they were not able to raise amongst themselves, the sum required for building a Meeting-house,...*"

"The Leinster express of April 26th 1834" states "*The building of a Presbyterian Meeting House in Galway, will be commenced next Month*".

An extract from the "Galway Advertiser dated Jul 18 2018" "*Persse's Distillery*" states "*For much of the 19th century, the Persse family ran one of the most successful distilleries in Ireland. Their product became world famous. They were major contributors to the industrial life of Galway and provided much needed employment. In addition to their staff, they were also supplied by a number of artisans working in the nun's Island area- coopers, cork manufacturers, printers, carters, case makers, etc...Rural Galway also benefited from the business as the distillery used all local grain in the manufacturing process. Persse insisted on using only the finest ingredients for their whiskey, and as a result the barley market in Kinvara grew and thrived.*"

An extract from the "Galway advertiser" dated Mar 10 2011 "*Nun's Island about one hundred years ago*" - mentions "*As you walk from O'Brien's Bridge, the houses on the right were numbered 1 to 24. Numbers 1 to 17 were substantial residences, and the remainder were probably built by Persse's Distillery for its workers.*"

An extract from "Persse's Galway Whiskey" by city historian William Henry states on page 134 of his book "*Some sources indicate that Persse's owned a number of houses in Nuns Island, and they were occupied by some of the Distillery Staff*".

We can see from above that the site of the Church was provided by "*a member of the established Church*". Given that Burton Persse owned this same land in 1855, we think it is reasonable to assume that Burton Persse was this "gentleman". Our hunch, which we cannot prove, is that some of the artisan workers supplying Persse's Distillery may have been members of the Presbyterian Community, and for that reason, Mr. Persse had an interest in helping them to establish their church called "Scot's Church". Burton Persse's descendants continued the development of the Distillery in Nun's Island, it is likely that they in turn were involved with the development of the "Manse" later in the 19th century. We will leave the task of establishing these facts beyond a reasonable doubt to another historian as it is outside the scope of this report.

We think it is helpful to include some information on Burton Persse's family background to understand how they came to be such prominent landowners and business people in Galway City. The patriarch, and it would appear, the founding member, of the Persse family in Galway, was Rev Dudley Persse (1625-1699).

Various text excerpts from Chapter 02 of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney are shown below in italics (3).

"Rev Dudley Persse (1625-1699)... Graduated from Trinity College with a bachelor of Divinity Degree on 26 January 1651..Held the office of archdeacon of Tuam from 1662-1670"... "In the aftermath of the Cromwellian Plantation many Protestant proprietors were in a position to take advantage of the transfer of land ownership from Catholics to Protestants....Persse seems to have been a beneficiary of these circumstances."... "By Letters Patent of the late King Charles II, dated 15 August 1677, Dudley Persse was granted 814 acres of land in Galway and Roscommon under the 'Acts of Settlement and Explanation"... Dudley settled firstly in Spring Garden, Tynagh where he lived until 1685. He then acquired further lands near Kilchrest, East Galway. Here in the townland of Creag a'Roiste, he established Roxborough House, which would become the principal seat of the Persse family.".... "After 1650, Dudley married Sarah Crofton (1635-1709)... whose Crofton ancestry roots can be traced back to William de Crofton (1323-1375)." (3)

Information below about the **Roxborough** branch of Rev Dudley Persse's family. Burton de Burgh Persse was a member of this branch of the Persse family.

"Henry Persse (1657-1733) Henry, Dudley's heir, married Mary Stratford, daughter of Robert Stratford MP, on 27 June 1688. They lived at Roxborough and Henry held the office of High Sherriff of Galway in 1701."..(3).

"Robert Persse (1704-1781) Robert, son of Henry and Mary above.. On 23 February 1727 he married Elizabeth Parsons,.. a sister of Sir Lawrence Parsons, 1st Bt, of Birr Castle. Robert held the office of high Sheriff of Co. Galway in 1742...Robert Persse.. acquired additional lands and established estates at Moyode and at Castleboy...The estate at Moyode would later be transferred to his son Burton Persse (1746-1831), and the Castleboy estate would transfer to another son, Parsons Persse." (3)

"Robert Persse's (1704-1781) sons" ... (3).

"William Persse (c. 1728-1802) He held the office of High Sherrif of Co. Galway in 1766. In 1777, he formed the Roxborough Volunteers and was an advocate of reform of the Irish Parliament. William is known to have corresponded with George Washington, President of the United States." (3).

"Parsons Persse (Parsons of Castleboy)" (3).

"Burton Persse (1746-1831).. "was a son of Robert Persse & Elizabeth Parsons... he married Sarah Pennefather of Co. Tipperary on 13 January 1770". (3).

William Persse above inherited the Roxborough estate from his father, therefore his descendants were the Roxborough branch of the Persse family. Two of William's sons: Robert (2nd) Persse (1763-1850) & Henry Stratford Persse (c.1769-1833) established Newcastle Brewery. Dudley Persse (1802-1878) was Robert (2nd) Persse's son, Lady Gregory's father, and Hugh Lanes grandfather. The Newcastle Brewery business would later spawn the establishment of Persse's Distillery at Nun's Island.

Burton Persse inherited the estate of Moyode as mentioned above, therefore his descendants were the Moyode branch of the Persse family. *"The Persse family of Moyode, a branch of the principal Persse family of Roxborough, had an extensive lineage also, extending from the family of Burton Persse, up to and including the family of Burton Robert Parsons Persse who died in 1885."* (3). It is this family that are associated with the existing buildings at 23 Nun's Island as well as Persse's distillery.

Moyode Estate & branch of Persse Family



Galway Blazers, Moyode Castle-image viewed online courtesy of places.galwaylibrary.ie

Text from sale of Moyode on “Frank Sweeney & Co. Auctioneers website” viewed online Dec 2022 states: “*The estate at Moyode was energetically developed by Burton Persse in the early decades of the 19th century and he is commemorated by an inscription on the arched entranceway to the stableyard, dated 1822.*”

Burton Persse is credited as having established the Galway blazers with his nephew Robert Parsons Persse of Castleboy. Excerpt from places.galwaylibrary.ie website (viewed online) states: “*Burton Persse, familiarly known as ‘Old Burton’, established a pack of hounds at Moyode as far back as 1770, and they were carried on without interruption there until about 1896. He was one of the greatest fox hunters of the day and held the mastership for 66 years. He hunted the pack the greater part of the time himself and rode out with them a fortnight before he died in 1836 at the age of 85. In 1803 the first ‘Hunt Club’ was established in Galway, called the ‘Castle Boy Hunt’ with Robert Parsons Persse of Castle Boy as master. He was a nephew of ‘Old Burton’ and the two of them hunted the county. ‘Old Burton’ the southern part and the nephew the northern. Robert Parsons Persse died in 1829 and the northern end of the county was hunted by a committee until 1840, when the title of the pack was changed to that of the ‘County Galway Hunt’, and the celebrated John Dennis became master until 1850. From ‘The Ranger: A journal for the Connaught Rangers’; edited by Lieut.-Colonel H. F. N. Jourdain, C.M.G.*”



Pl 4: Burton de Burgh Persse, Jun., of Moyode Castle, d. 1859

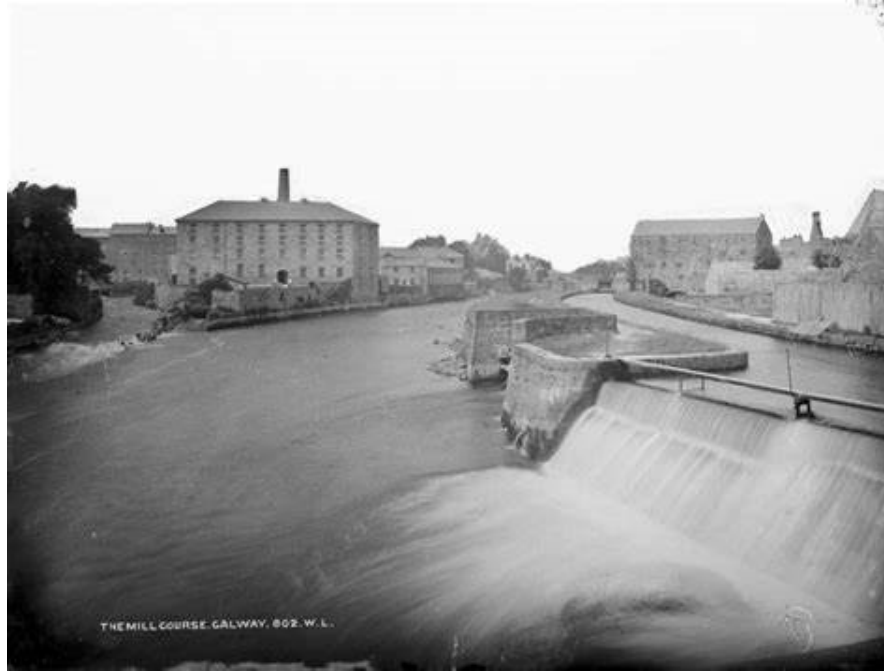
Burton de Burgh Persse (c. 1782-1859) was the son & heir of Burton Persse (Old Burton). We think he is likely to have been the landlord named as owner of "Scots Church" in the Griffith valuation as mentioned above.

Text excerpt from Chapter 03 of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney" states that Burton de Burgh Persse "*..held the office of DL and JP/ He was the High Sherrif of Co. Galway in 1816. He firstly married Anchoretta Eyre, daughter of Colonel Giles Eyre, on 2 January 1820. They had four children...Anchoretta (Eyre) Persse died on 27 April 1824, and Burton secondly married his cousin, Matilda Persse, second daughter of Henry Stratford Persse of Galway... Burton and Matilda had eleven children.*"

Various text excerpts from Chapter 10 of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney relating to Burton de Burgh Persse give an indication of his actions during the Famine years.

"Grand Jury Memorial of 1840. In 1840, the Grand Jury OF Co. Galway, which included among its members Burton Persse of Moyode Castle..."

"The Pilot newspaper of 13 May 1846 reprinted a report from the Galway Mercury which stated that Burton Persse of Moyode had increased the wages of his workers from 6d to 8d., but they would be required to attend work an hour earlier in the morning in lieu of the increase. Tragedy struck the Moyode family in 1847 when burton's son, William Henry, died aged sixteen. Following the famine years, when many landlords were disposed to clearing poorer tenants from their estates, Burton Persse received what might be described as a testimonial of his benevolent nature.. ...in...report which appeared in the evening post of 4 September 1849..."



View of Persse's Distillery, Photo viewed online-courtesy of Galway City Museum

Links to the Persse Distillery of Nun's Island

Various text excerpts from Chapter 03 (pages 43 to 46) of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney (3) indicated below in italics provide information on the history of the Nun's Island distillery and its links to Burton Persse:

"Robert Persse (2nd) of Roxborough, together with his brother Henry Stratford Persse of Newcastle, Galway, established a brewery in Galway." "The Persse brewing operation would appear to have expanded considerably, but may have become overstretched financially in doing so. On February 14th 1815, Newcastle Porter Brewery, Galway was advertised for sale before the Commissioners of Bankrupt." "...part of the detail of items listed for sale 'Bankrupt Henry S. Persse's interest in a newly erected Flour Mill and Stores, in the Nun's Island, in the town of Galway..." " "The lease of the four mill and stores referred to.. above... is held in the Special Collections, Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway.. The owner of the property was Robert Hedges Eyre of Macroom Castle Co. Cork, and the lease, which was dated 23 march 1811, granted to Henry Stratford Persse of Newcastle, Galway for the lives of the lessee, his eldest son William Persse aged about 17 years and his second son, Henry Sadler Persse, aged about 16 years. All that and those the Flour Mill built with Brick and Stone and Slated at Nun's Island in the Town of Galway, bounded on the North by the Mill pond or River which supplies the same on the south by the road in front, on the East by a plot of unoccupied Ground now in the possession of Walter Joyce and on the West by the Mills in possession of Thomas Squibb together with the lawful watercourse belonging to the said Mill..."

"Attached to the lease, there is a map and a note of survey carried out by Patk Keogh, which states: 'A MAP and survey of the New Flour Mill as lately erected by Henry S. Persse Esq, on that part of the Nun's Island River being part of the estate of Robert Hedges Eyre Esq., and was ascertained to be the 1/3 rd Part of said River under the writ of Partitions brought for the several Divisions made of the Whole Property in 1806 Contain Including half Rood Six Perches, or there about, Surveyed in March 1811, for Robert Hedges Eyre Esq.'"

*"In the Registry of Deeds, Dublin, dated 1 February 1816, confirms the conveyance of the sale of; 'the Estate and effects of Robert Persse and Henry Stratford Persse, late of Newcastle in the Town of the County of Galway of Galway, Brewers and Partners in Trade, bankrupts for the first part, and **Burton Persse**, in actual possession of said lands extending to three acres'."*



Images of work token of "H. S. Persse Nun's island Distillery" & "Persses Galway Whiskey Ltd" Advert viewed on line- courtesy of Galway City Museum

Links to Persse Distillery of Nun's Island

Text excerpt from Chapter 15 (pages 221 & 222) of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney (3) states "...Burton Persse acquired the bankrupt brewing & distilling business of Robert and Henry Stratford Persse in 1816.." "... Burton Persse has advertised an "Extensive brewery or Distillery Concern- To be Let'. In 1823, and it appears that he took on a business partner as a result of this advertisement. However, a newspaper notice published in 1832 confirmed that 'the co-partnership carried on under the name BURTON PERSSE & Co. Distillers at New Castle, was This Day DISSOLVED by mutual consent. The business or Trade will continue to be carried on by Burton Persse solely."

.. "On 19 January 1841 the Freeman's Journal reported: "Three distilleries at Galway have dwindled to one, which is worked by Mr. Persse. The others were Messrs. Lynch and Joyce's."

It seems that Burton Persse initially operated the distilling business in Newcastle, north of Galway University. There are roads there still called "distillery road". The physical links to Nun's Island appear to have been initially relating to the flour mills and stores described in the lease description above.

Text excerpt from Chapter 15 (pages 225 & 226) of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney (3) states "The distillery and store of James and Patrick Joyce at Nun's Island is believed to have been purchased by Burton Persse's son, Burton Robert Parsons Persse when together with a brewery in Castlebar, they were offered for sale on 7 February 1840. The advertisement of the proposed sale was published in the Dublin Evening Post on 4 February 1840 and it contained a detailed description of the Nun's Island facility: 'FIRST-That large and valuable Distillery Establishment at Nun's Island in the Town of Galway, at presently occupied and worked by Messrs. James and Patrick Joyce....' "... "The Persse family used the property as a woollen mill at first but by the mid-1840s the distilling operation was revived at Nun's Island"...

"Following the death of Burton de Burgh Persse in 1859, he was succeeded by his son Burton Robert Parsons Persse. However it was the son of the latter, Henry Sadlier Persse, who would have a major impact on the distillery business. "... "Henry Sadlier Persse is credited with modernising the production and marketing of Persse whiskey, and by 1886 the Persse distillery was reported to be producing 400,000 gallons of whiskey a year."

"In 1903, Persse whiskey was advertised as 'Supplied to the House of Commons, Crystal Palace and P and O Steamers'. The slogan 'Favourite in the House of Commons' was quickly added to the brand's label. It is also reputed that Persse whiskey was a favourite tippie of Sir Winston Churchill."

"Taxation and increasing competition from Dublin distilleries impacted negatively on the business and by January 1907 the Persse distillery was in liquidation..."

Text excerpts from Chapter 14 (pages 216) of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney (3) states:

"Henry Sadlier Persse died on 8 March 1899, at which time he was Chairman of H.S. Persse, now a limited company."

"William Henry Persse continued the family connection with the Persse whiskey business, which continued to provide much needed employment until it ceased trading in 1910. Henry S. Persse's daughter, Violet Seymour Persse, married Major Ernest Johnson and lived at Ashton Hayes, near Chester, England. She was invested as a member, Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 1919 for her services to wounded soldiers.."

Artistic legacy of the Persse Family

As mentioned above Sir Hugh Lane & Lady Gregory were members of the Persse family, descended from Burton Persse's cousin, Robert Persse of the Roxborough branch of the Persse family. Robert Persse along with his brother Henry Stratford Persse, established the Newcastle Brewery which would eventually develop into Persse's Distillery of Nun's Island.



Text excerpt from Chapter 4 (page 311) of "The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964" by Gerry Kearney (3) states: *"Arguably the most famous of member of the Persse family of Roxborough, Isabella Augusta Persse (1852-1932) developed a keen interest in Irish mythology and folklore. Already an accomplished writer when she met W.B. Years in 1894, they, together with Edward Martin, established the Irish Literary Theatre in Dublin, later to become the Abbey Theatre."*

Lady Gregory was the daughter of Dudley Persse & Frances Barry of Roxborough. Dudley's father was Robert Persse mentioned above in relation to the Newcastle Distillery

Photo of Lady Gregory from the national Archives collection viewed online



Text excerpt from Chapter 4 (page 311) of “The Persse Family of County Galway-Genealogy and History 1554-1964” by Gerry Kearney (3) states: “*Sir Hugh Percy Lane was the son of Adelaide Persse, sister of Lady Gregory, and Revd James W. Lane.*”

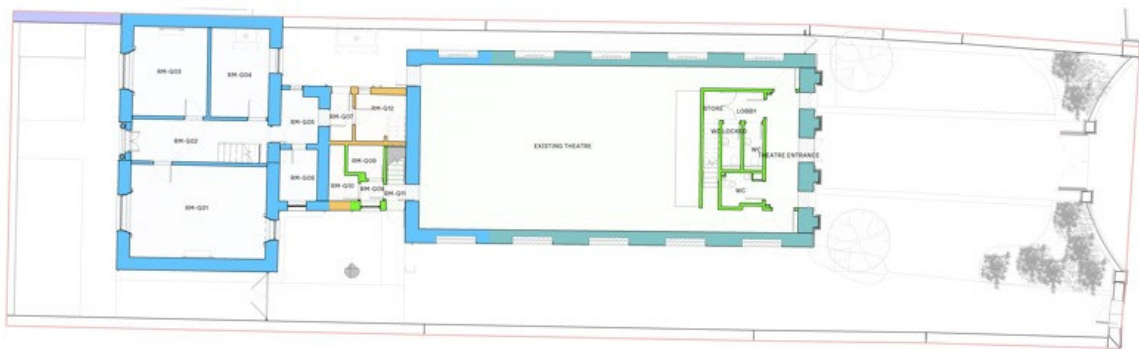
Text excerpt from www.hughlane.ie viewed online “*Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane is called after the art collector Hugh Lane, who was born in Cork in 1875. His aunt was Lady Augusta Gregory, a leading figure in the Irish Celtic Revival. Hugh Lane loved art and he bought and sold paintings in London. He felt that there should be a Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin representing the best of Irish and International artists. Together with his friends, Lane established the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Clonmell Harcourt Street, Dublin in 1908.*”

Photo of Sir Hugh Lane from www.hughlane.ie

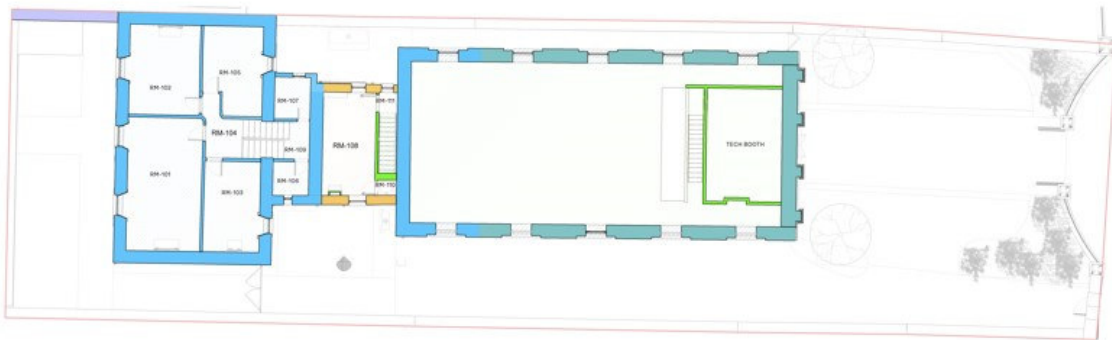
As Adelaide Persse was Lady Gregory’s sister Sir Hugh Lane was the grandson of Dudley Persse & Frances Barry of Roxborough and great grandson of Robert Persse (Newcastle Brewery).

The Manse & Nun's Island Theatre - Estimated Chronology of the Buildings

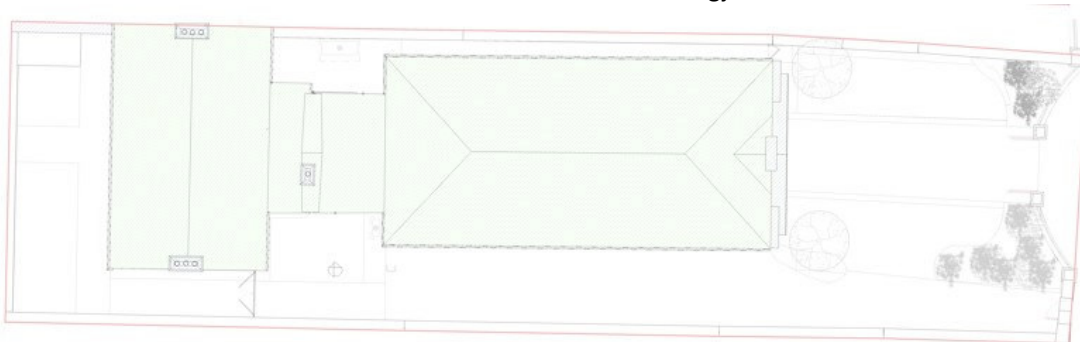
- CIRCA 1835 - ELEMENTS CUT THROUGH
- CIRCA 1835 - ELEMENTS IN BACKGROUND
- BETWEEN 1845 & 1855 - ELEMENTS CUT THROUGH
- BETWEEN 1845 & 1855 - ELEMENTS IN BACKGROUND
- BETWEEN 1855 & 1872 - ELEMENTS CUT THROUGH
- BETWEEN 1855 & 1872 - ELEMENTS IN BACKGROUND
- BETWEEN 1872 & 1895 - ELEMENTS CUT THROUGH
- BETWEEN 1872 & 1895 - ELEMENTS IN BACKGROUND
- EARLY 2000'S - ELEMENTS CUT THROUGH
- EARLY 2000'S - ELEMENTS IN BACKGROUND



The Manse & Nun's Island Theatre -estimated Construction Chronology at Ground floor level



The Manse & Nun's Island Theatre -estimated Construction Chronology at First floor level



The Manse & Nun's Island Theatre -estimated Construction Chronology at Roof level

Current Context Building Condition



OBFA Photos of existing Theatre space and Entrance lobby within Original Presbyterian Meeting hall.

The original Presbyterian meeting hall building constructed in 1835 (extended between 1855 & 1872) is still extant and is generally in good condition. This part has been altered internally when the building was transformed into its current use as a Theatre (circa early 2000s), creating a block box theatre interior with associated technical space, main entrance lobby and toilets. The existing historic fabric of this part requires maintenance to ensure its protection into the future.



OBFA Photos of existing link entrance space and associated 1st floor office

The Link building connecting the Theatre and the original “Manse” (we estimate to have been constructed between 1872 & 1895), was significantly altered as part of the conversion of the building to an Arts Centre/ Theatre space (mentioned above) creating new entrance on south façade of link to office area comprising, staff toilets, access stairs and 1st floor office. This modern part internally is in reasonable condition however the external fabric elements (walls/ roof) are in poor condition.



OBFA Photos of existing "Manse" from the riverside and from area to the south of the link

The original "Manse" (constructed between 1855 & 1872) has generally retained its original form and layout. It has had some alterations (eg replacement windows/ replacement roof finishes/ rainwater goods). This building area has not been properly in use for some time, except for use as informal storage space and its condition has deteriorated significantly.



OBFA Photos of existing external areas within the site at 23 Nun's Island

The original stone boundary walls, entrance pillars constructed in 1835 still exist but require repair, especially the roadside stone entrance pillars and walls. The original entrance railings and associated gates appear to be in good condition. There is a concrete balustrading that is not original formed on top of an original stone plinth along the riverside. Apart from good quality paving in front of the existing theatre, the external surfaces are of poor quality (combination of concrete, tarmac & rough gravel). All the external finishes are in poor condition. The soft landscaping includes feature traditional Yew Trees framing the Theatre front entrance façade. The soft landscaping requires maintenance as is generally overgrown engulfing some of the original stone features, especially to the roadside walls.

Detailed Condition Analysis

The main building alterations relate to the “Manse” and the adjacent link building. The only alterations within the Theatre building are of a very minor nature, configuring modern toilet facilities to make them more accessible. The focus of the building condition reports and this part of the report is on the Manse and the Link building. The following reports were carried out by specialists to establish details of the existing building condition of these areas. Please refer to these reports for full detail.

- Investigative & Condition Report by McKenna’s Consulting Engineers
- Damp Assessment Report by Damp Doctor Ltd.
- Asbestos Survey Report by Higgins Demolition & Asbestos removal.

External Walls



McKennas Photo of External Wall opening -Manse

OBFA photos of Northern link façade -showing damaged render and rainwater goods

McKenna’s Consulting Engineers arranged for small areas of render to be removed (in locations where hollow sounds were noted) revealing a mixture of brickwork and rubble stonework. The condition of the brickwork was noted to be loose and particularly dilapidated where revealed in the external walls of the link structures, where timber lintels in poor condition were also exposed. The existing unpainted render appears to be sand cement. The existing render is cracked in places, with some parts removed with areas where hollow sounds were noted in the tap tests conducted by McKennas Consulting Engineers.



McKennas Photo of External Wall opening -Link

Existing Internal Walls & Ceilings



OBFA photos of existing internal wall finishes within the Manse (with varying substrates) and bulged finish

McKennis Consulting Engineers arranged for small areas of plaster to be removed (in locations where hollow sounds were noted) revealing various substrates. There is a mixture of lime based plaster on masonry walls (to gable & cross walls), dry lining to external walls incorporating polystyrene backed wallpaper, lime plaster on laths to upper floor level internal studs. The Damp Assessment report identifies high levels of humidity in general, areas where there is evidence of rising damp, plaster with salt content and areas in the link where water ingress through the roof has led to the serious deterioration of finishes. There are soft spots in the plaster affected by moisture, there are sizeable cracks which appear to be due to differential shrinkage where timber substrates meet masonry, the finishes are soot stained near chimneys, there are places where the plaster has bulged and separated from its timber lath substrates to upper floor stud partitions.



OBFA photos of existing internal ceiling finishes within the Manse -damaged areas / lath & plaster visible

The ceiling finishes are generally lime based plaster on timber lath substrates. There is considerable cracking, patches where finishes have fallen away, evidence of high humidity levels and mould growth. There is a roof leaf in the valley of the link return roof which has caused extensive damage.

Existing Floors



OBFA photos of existing upper timber floors and McKennas photo of existing internal timber ground floor

McKennas Consulting Engineers arranged for small areas of existing timber floor finishes to be opened up to establish existing build ups. At ground floor level new uninsulated suspended timber floors have been fitted on original stone sleeper walls to the hallway and south of the Manse. These replacement floors are in good condition however McKennas Consulting Engineers consider the joists undersized. There are existing older uninsulated suspended timber floors to the north of the Manse at ground floor level that are in very poor condition with evidence of dry rot. The Asbestos report identifies the presence of Asbestos containing materials in the vinyl tile floor finish in the back kitchen at ground floor level. There are existing solid concrete floors present at ground floor level in the link buildings. The solid ground floors under the stairs half landing in the Manse link (where there has been serious water ingress overhead) are damaged. The upper timber floor adjacent to the Manse half landing, where there is water ingress, is severely damaged, with dry rot/ wood worm in evidence and a whole section that has caved in. The main upper floor of the Manse is an original timber floor with timber board sheathing, with various covering finishes to the rooms and timber boarding exposed to the landing areas. This upper floor is in good condition.

Existing Roofs



McKennas photos of existing roofs

The pitched roof structures are cut timber roof with slate finishes. The Manse & Lean-to roof have replacement fibre cement slate finishes with a mixture of boarded sarking & roofing felt substrates visible from attic spaces. Asbestos containing slates have been identified in Asbestos report to the main Manse roof and lean-to return over stairs. There is serious water ingress under the link roof valley where the roof structure is seriously damaged. There has been a foam spray type insulation fitted between the collar joists of the main Manse roof. The rafters of the main two storey roof are in good condition.

Existing Chimneys & Rainwater Goods



OBFA photos of existing external Manse Chimneys & surface pipework

There are original masonry chimneys to each gable of the main Manse roof, finished with modern sand cement render. A modern masonry chimney has been erected over the lean-to roof valley with a sand cement rendered finish, as can be seen from the roof photos above, the render is severely cracked. There are no original chimney caps remaining. Close up assessments will need to be undertaken when access to the roof is possible to determine more details on the condition of the existing chimneys.

The rainwater goods are generally replacement poor quality upvc rainwater goods. There is a mixture of upvc and cast iron surface fitted vertical soil waste & vent pipes, the cast iron pipework is in poor condition.

Existing External Doors



OBFA photos of existing main Manse external entrance doorway

There are replacement modern solid timber external doorways to the link building areas. The original Manse main doorcase with curved fanlight, supporting Doric columns on stone bases, typical of the mid 19th century style (except for the additional doorway fanlight), is still extant. The columns, formed in timber have deteriorated in condition at the stone bases where a whole section is missing (left hand side). The doorcase painted finishes are flaking off and have nearly worn away completely. The solid timber panel double doors need maintenance but are in good condition. There is a replacement section of coloured glass to the door fanlight. The original lime based render finishes have been removed revealing the stone surround which would originally have been concealed and protected. There is a high quality bush hammered Limestone threshold.

Existing External Windows



OBFA photos of existing external Manse windows

All the external windows appear to be replacement windows, in a variety of styles and materials, generally late 20th century timber & upvc casements, as well as more recent timber sash windows to the link areas. The timber casement windows require maintenance. Metal security grilles have been fitted internally to many of the ground floor windows. There are high quality bush hammered window cills to the windows of the main original two storey Manse, with concrete cills to the link buildings.

Existing Internal Doors



OBFA photos of existing main Manse internal doorways

There are existing original solid timber doors still in place within the main Manse area. The doors to the front riverside rooms are generally paneled (4 pane) and the doors to the back kitchen and rear return areas have vertical t&g sheeted timber finishes. All internal doors require maintenance. There are some original doorknobs still in place with later surface mounted knob/ locksets added to upper level bedroom doors. There are protective hand plates visible on the paneled doors.

Existing Window Shutters



OBFA photos of existing main Manse window internal paneling & shutters

There are original timber shutters/ paneling of high quality in extant to the interiors of main original Manse house windows. These elements are generally in good condition, requiring some repair & maintenance. The Damp Assessment report identifies the presence of woodworm to some of the window boards where high humidity levels were observed.

Existing Trims / Framing Features



OBFA photos of existing main Manse internal framing

Plain style plaster cornices and picture rails are in place to the front riverside rooms of the Manse at ground floor level. There are some original timber architraves and skirtings still in place to the main Manse areas, albeit with some sections missing or damaged. Replacement skirtings have been fitted to the ground floor room on the south side of the Manse. The Damp Assessment report identifies the presence of woodworm/ furniture beetle/ dry rot to some internal joinery elements exposed to excessive moisture.

Existing Stairways



OBFA photos of existing main Manse stairway

There is a plain modern straight flight stairwell without feature accessing the 1st floor office in the link building. The original solid timber stairway of the Manse is still in place and has beautifully crafted turned newels and curved solid timber handrails with slender balusters. The style is typical of the style of the mid to late 19th century. The solid cut timber supports to the underside of the lower flight, visible from the hallway, are suffering from exposure to high levels of humidity (surface staining). Some of the balusters are missing. Timber sheeted paneling which would have most likely concealed the underside of the ground floor flight below the timber string, is no longer in place.

Existing fireplaces & stove



OBFA photos of existing main Manse fireplaces & stove

There are four original Victorian style fireplaces and surrounds still in place as well as one mid-20th century fireplace with a tiled surround and hearth. There are cut stone surrounds to the ground floor fireplaces, timber surrounds to the upper level fireplaces. The original fireplaces have cast iron/ tiled inserts & grates. One ground floor fireplace has a stone hearth, otherwise the hearths are tiled. There are cast iron hearth fenders still in place to one 1st floor fireplace. There is a solid fuel range stove in place in the back kitchen.

Statement of Significance

According to the NIAH data shown at the beginning of this report, Categories of Special Interest for 23 Nun's Island are "**Architectural, Artistic & Social**" and rated to be of Regional importance. The main description in the NIAH data relates to the Original Presbyterian Church rather than to the Manse itself.

Architectural

The original Presbyterian Church designed by James Cusack, together with its forecourt setting (stone boundary walls/ railings/ gates and formal landscaping) is an Architectural gem, a high-quality example of the 19th century Neoclassical style. It is of a modest scale in terms of its size, but not in terms of its Architectural ambition with beautiful proportions, fine detailing exhibiting highly skilled craftsmanship.

The Manse is more modest, but is a fine example of mid-19th century Irish residential Architecture. There have been alterations, but the form, layout, and main features of the main Manse are still present. The Manse riverside entrance façade with its symmetrical proportions is best appreciated from the western riverside opposite the Manse.

In my opinion the modern lean-to structure linking the Manse to the Theatre is of poor architectural quality. I think that its inverted roof form detracts from the quality of the original buildings.

Artistic

I think the current use of 23 Nun's Island as a space for the Arts (existing Theatres/ part of Galway Arts centre) benefits and enhances its Artistic significance.

Social

The creation of a Presbyterian meeting Hall and Manse in this location is an important element in the social history of Nun's Island. The NIAH doesn't rate this building as having Historical Importance, however I think it also has historical significance. I think understanding this building in the context of Nun's Island's Industrial past make it very significant. It can play a part in bringing to life the history of this district and help to consolidate the importance of this history in terms of the development of Galway. In addition, a renewed appreciation of these stories may be helpful in protecting/ bringing back into use some of the Industrial buildings, now derelict, in Nun's Island.

Existing Features of Particular Importance

The following is a summary list of building features that make a major contribution to the Architectural importance of these buildings:

- Forecourt setting with stone boundary walls & entrance pillars, entrance railings and gates, Yew trees framing front façade.
- External cut stone walls, external windows / doors, cut stone classical features of front facade of the original Presbyterian meeting house.
- The existing theatre building cut stone external walls, doors, windows, roof forms in general.
- Form and general arrangement of the riverside part of the Manse with its riverside Doorcase and gable chimneys.
- Internal features within the Manse (original doors, window shutters/ architraves, skirtings, cornices, lath & plasterwork, fireplace surrounds and original staircase).

These elements require maintenance to ensure that they will be preserved into the future.

Proposed Works

The proposed building project focus is to bring back into full use the Manse as a Creative Arts Centre with 7 no individual creative rooms. Please refer to Part 8 Architectural drawing package and OBFA Part 8 Design Statement for full details of the design proposal.

The main alterations of the Manse are internal within the link areas between the original manse and the current Theatre building, to create a new reception area, accessible shower/ wc and new lift enabling universal access to all upper floor areas. The existing link building form will be remodeled replacing the inverted lean-to roof with a new pitched roof ensuring adequate height for new lift. The façade of the link building will be adjusted to suit the new roofline and to provide a new public entrance on the southern façade.

In addition, there will be minor internal alterations within the existing Theatre building to remodel and improve the accessibility of existing toilet facilities.

Externally the original landscaping features will be maintained and repaired as necessary. Improvements are planned to replace poor quality elements with higher quality elements sensitively designed to enrich the project. Proposals for consideration of new signage, appropriate and necessary for the building function, are included. Existing overground cables connected to the front of the theatre will be undergrounded.

The Asbestos report identifies Asbestos Containing materials (ACMs), they will be removed in compliance with S.I. No 386 of 2006 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010 by an approved contractor with valid insurance and evidence of current Asbestos training.

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

The following table details the main alterations proposed, evaluates the heritage impact in each case, and notes any mitigation of the impact which could be considered.

Proposal	Impact Evaluation	Mitigation/ Comments
Internal demolitions within the link buildings, removal of link inverted roof and removal of partition between back kitchen and front room in the Manse. Remodelling of link roof to pitched roof form, associated adjustments to link façade including enlarging entrance.	Many of the link elements proposed for removal are badly damaged and do not make a positive contribution to the significance of the protected structure.	The creation of a larger riverside room will have a positive impact. The new pitched roof form will form a link façade that we think will be more complimentary to the existing Manse and Theatre buildings.
New single storey extension to the north of the link to house new dressing area	The existing north yard is currently full of services and this space detracts from the character of the protected structures.	Making better use of this space will be positive for the protected structures.
Use of flat roof above extension as external maintenance space for external Services	The existing services are currently wall mounted on the public façade of the Theatre building therefore it will be a great improvement to move them into an area that will not be so visible.	The height of the guarding walls to the new roof area will be designed to fully conceal the view of the new services when standing at ground level.
Provision of new layout within link area to create new entrance reception, part m lift, accessible wc/ shower.	The current link area is mostly disused and is very uninviting. Making this area into a welcoming space utilising all areas will bring new life to the Manse and will have a very positive impact.	Making better use of this space will be positive for the protected structure.

Proposal	Impact Evaluation	Mitigation/ Comments
Provision of solar panels to both roof pitches of new roof.	Thanks to the orientation of the roofs the new solar panels will not be very visible from the ground.	This measure will have a positive impact in terms of sustainability and can be accommodated discreetly so that there will be no negative impact on the protected structure.
Alterations, including some replacement, of existing windows to Church house	The existing replacement windows are of poor architectural quality. Replacement with more appropriately designed windows will have a positive impact.	The new windows must be of a high quality, design and craftsmanship.
Replacement of riverside guarding (above stone plinth level)	The concrete balustrades are badly proportioned and do not enhance the Manse. Replacement with quality well proportioned metal guardings will improve the appearance of the Manse from the riverside and will have a positive impact.	The replacement guarding must be well designed and made of high quality durable elegant materials.
Replacement of existing modern side gates with new high-quality gates	Provision of new high-quality artistic metal gates designed as part of an integrated landscaping for the site will be a great improvement as the current side gates have no architectural merit.	The replacement gate must be well designed and made of high quality durable elegant materials.
Remodelling of external landscaped areas within the site	Extending the landscaping design to include the whole of the site so that poorer quality finishes such as tarmac & concrete are replaced with high quality stone paving will improve the amenity and the setting of the protected structure.	Maintenance & trimming soft landscaping will help to reveal historic Architectural features that are concealed by overgrowth.
Provision of new signage elements	The new signage will be carefully designed to ensure that it will not detract from the protected structure.	No surface mounted signage to be fitted to the historic walls

Conservation Strategy

The philosophy for the interventions will be guided by accepted principles such as those of the ICOMOS Charters and the DOEHLG Statutory Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities. The intention will be to restrict all interventions to the minimum doing 'as little as possible and as much as necessary'. The alterations and extensions will be carefully considered at detailed design stage so that Architectural solutions will have a positive impact on the Architectural heritage and will be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.

Conclusion

The main part of the Manse has not been in full use for some time and has fallen into a state of disrepair. The proposal to adapt the Manse to a Creative Arts Centre will bring the building back into full use and allow for the repair and ongoing maintenance of its historic features, ensuring its survival into the future. This will have a positive impact.

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